

Dec 31, 2002

Federal Communications Commission  
Washington DC.

The Matter of:  
**Modification of Amateur Radio Rules and Regulations**

**RM 10620**

The undersigned, a licensed Amateur Radio Operator submits these comments in opposition to the referenced Proceeding.

## **BACKGROUND.**

The Commission Issued a Public Notice announcing it had initiated a Rule Making Proceeding to seek comments on proposed changes in the Amateur Radio service Rules. This item has been assigned as Rule Making Proceeding Number 10620. Dale E. Reich, Petitioner, referred this matter to the Commission.

In his initial comments, Petitioner proposes certain amendments to CFR 47, Part 97 governing the Amateur Radio service, specifically asking for a “Merit and Service Upgrade” of the Novice and Advanced class of operator license. The “merit” upgrade would, among other things be granted to those licensees based on holding these classes of Amateur Radio Service licenses for over 20 years.

The Petition also asks for changes to allow Rule modifications, which would grant additional operator privileges in specific sub-bands for Novice class operators.

## **Comment.**

This commenter sees no value in adopting the proposed changes, which upon review are contrary to the fundamental basis and the history of the Amateur Radio Service.

## **DISCUSSION.**

**The History of Amateur Radio is rich with the tradition of knowledge building and earning advanced privileges.**

The Amateur Radio Service was established in the early part of the last century to license those who wished to experiment and learn about the newly emerging technology of radio waves and electronics. These early experimenters tested for licenses that granted them special permission to operate on specific portions of the electromagnetic spectrum. These individuals were pioneers of the technology and enjoyed learning, building equipment and expanding the knowledge base as the technology developed. The FCC

established the licensing of Amateur Radio Operators in its acknowledgement of the ability of the hobby to advance communication and technical knowledge, and enhance international goodwill. The hobby of electronic experimentation grew and developed, and new FCC Rules and Regulations were furthered to provide for the expanding interest.

Entry level licensing was developed to allow beginners and learners access to the airwaves; more advanced testing and licensing granted privileges to those who developed their skills and proficiency. As the skills of the operators advanced, upon proving proficiency, their privileges grew. The enhanced privileges were not tied to a length of service or licensing history, but required proven levels of knowledge and skill. There has been no provision for “merit” advancement in the history of Amateur Radio. And there should not be.

Amateur Radio Operators have contributed to many advances in technology, as a result of experimentation, trial and error, reading and publicizing their results or sharing knowledge. Advances did not occur as a result of “merit” but came as a result of a quest for knowledge. While organizations such as the Quarter Century Wireless Association and other groups may exist for Amateurs with special interests or length of service, membership bestows no enhanced operator privileges. However, Amateur organizations, clubs and publications do regularly award certification for special achievements that recognize operators’ special skills or learning. Examples of these are “Worked All States” or “Emergency Communicator” certification. These are not awarded on “merit”, but by enhancing specific operator skills. This learning, skill building and recognition are very motivational in serving to entice the amateur to move up to the next level of licensing and operational opportunities.

### **The Petition lacks a compelling need.**

The Petitioner, although well meaning, fails to make a consistent, compelling case for his proposals. At one point requesting a “merit” upgrade for twenty plus years of service, at other times suggesting the term be fifteen years under certain circumstances. For good measure he throws in a “senior citizens” upgrade, but with no justification. Petitioner then alleges that the upgrade from Advanced to Extra class would “...end some minor confusion.” but, offers no explanation of what confusion exists, or by whom. He further stresses that a “merit” upgrade is fair to Amateurs “...who took much harder tests of the past...” His arguments lack substance and these are not compelling enough reasons to warrant the proposed Rule modifications he proposes.

### **The existing system is fair and adequate.**

The reality is that the current tests are not difficult to pass and they reflect a much closer parallel to today’s state-of-the-art. The probability of a novice that has not had enough interest in the “hobby” to study and pass a 35 question test, likely means that particular operator is truly not interested in getting additional privileges. If an Advanced class operator took a “much harder test in the past”, and if they have kept up with the current state of the hobby, they should have not difficulty passing the now allegedly “simpler” Extra class exam.

Age is no barrier to upgrade. Applicants as young as ten to twelve years old frequently pass the exams.

Study guides and materials for any class of license upgrade are readily available at Amateur clubs, bookstores, public libraries, “Ham Fairs” and the inter-net on line. In the tradition of “Elmering”,

bringing along newcomers by mentoring, many Amateurs share their skills and provide study materials to others at no cost. There is no economic barrier to the motivated Amateur in seeking a license upgrade.

The former “learning barrier” of some applicants not being able to increase their Morse code speed has been eliminated. The Commissions now requires only a five word per minute code proficiency and granting credit for previously passing this test element.

## **CONCLUSION.**

The rightful path to upgraded privileges is via the applicant passing a written test demonstrating his or hers present knowledge of the current FCC Rules, Amateur bands, operating modes and electronic theory. “Merit” upgrades are unnecessary, unwise and contrary to the history of the Amateur Radio Service. The established Rules and Regulations should not be amended to accommodate the proposals put forth by the Petitioner.

Respectfully Submitted.

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